THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) In response to an invitation by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan from 20-21 February 1999 on the inaugural run of the Delhi-Lahore-Delhi bus service.

Rail link between Dhaka and Calcutta

375. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a proposal to restart the rail link between Dhaka and Calcutta is being discussed between the Government of India and the Government of Bangladesh;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to restart the old rail link between Calcutta and the North-East; and

(c) whether it is being contemplated to link Agartala with Assam by railway?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Rail links already exist between India and Bangladesh. There are two broad gauge connections at Gede (India)-Darsana (Bangladesh) and Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and two meter gauge connections at Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh) and Mahisasan (India) and Shahbazpur (Bangladesh).

(b) Government have repeated proposals to the Government of Bangladesh for transit facilities for passenger and freight traffic by rail.

(c) Yes, Sir.

Use of Bhutan as militant base

376. DR ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India expressed concern over the use of Bhutan as militant base by North-Eastern insurgent groups;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the assistance given/proposed to Bhutan for drive against the insurgents?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) The presence of North-Eastern militants on Bhutanese territory has been a subject of discussion with Bhutan. Both sides share concerns on this issue, which was discussed at length in the National Assembly of Bhutan at its last session in June-July 1998. The National Assembly recognised the danger posed by these militants to Bhutan itself and sought to find the most appropriate ways and means to move them from their territory. India and Bhutan have been in regular touch to find a solution to this issue and are cooperating with each other in this regard.

परमाणु परीक्षणों के उपरांत भारत-अमेरिकी वार्ता

377. **डा० महेश चन्द्र शर्मा:** क्या **विदेश** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) पिछले वर्ष मई में किये गये परमाणु परीक्षणों के उपरांत प्रारंभ हुई भारत-अमेरिकी वार्ताओं का ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ख) क्या इन वार्ताओं के आठवें दौर में अफगानिस्तान के बारे में भी चर्चा हुई थी; और

(ग) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है?

विदेश मंत्री (श्री जसवन्त सिंह): (क) भारत और संयुक्त राज्य अमरीका जून, 1998 से उच्च स्तरीय गंभीर बातचीत में लगे हुए हैं। भारत-अमरीका वार्ता का अद्यतन दौर नई दिल्ली में 29-31 जनवरी, 1999 के बीच हुआ था।

भारतीय पक्ष का नेतृत्व विदेश मंत्री श्री जसवन्त सिंह ने किया। अमरीकी शिष्टमंडल का नेतृत्व अमरीकी उप विदेश मंत्री श्री स्ट्रोब तालबोट ने किया। प्रमुख वार्ताकारों को बातचीत करने के लिए क्रमशः भारत के प्रधान मंत्री